

## Midtown Neighborhoods Plan

## Plan Basics

The Midtown Neighborhoods Plan is a partnership effort of the Alta Vista Neighborhood, the Beacon Hill Neighborhood, the St. Ann's Neighborhood, MidTown on Blanco and the City's Planning Department. The plan is the result of over a year of hard work by the Planning Team and other active residents, business persons and church members.

## Plan Boundaries

The plan area is bound by IH-10 to the west, Hildebrand to the north, San Pedro Avenue to the east and IH-10, San Pedro Creek and Laurel Street to the south.

The western boundary of the planning area is defined by Interstate 10 and the railroad tracks. Another railroad track, located near the middle of the planning area, serves as the dividing line between the Beacon Hill NA and the Alta Vista NA. Both of the tracks serve a significant amount of rail traffic.

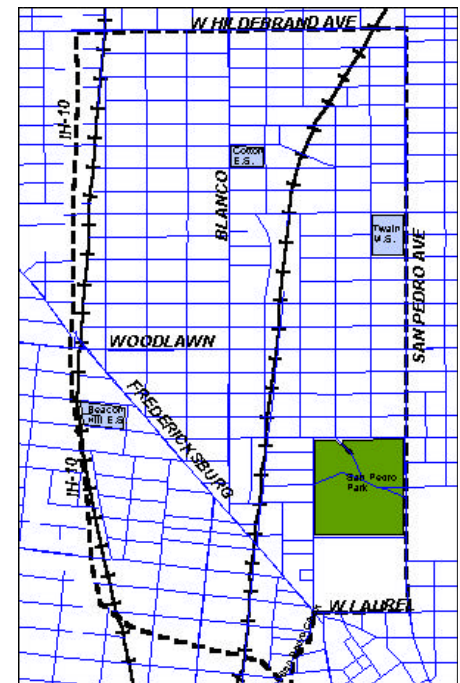
To the north, the plan area is bound by Hildebrand Avenue. Between 1838 and 1944, Hildebrand Avenue was the northern boundary of the City. Today, this street serves as a boundary between neighborhoods within the planning area and the Edison Neighborhood located to the north.

To the east, San Pedro Avenue is a major commercial thoroughfare that links downtown to Loop 410. This street divides the planning area from the Monte Vista Neighborhood. San Antonio College and VIA Metropolitan Transit are located along San Pedro Avenue at the southern end of the planning area.

To the south, the plan area is adjacent to the Five Points Neighborhood.

## Why create a plan?

Developed by neighbors, businesses, neighborhood associations, community organizations, churches, schools, developers, investors, and other interested groups, the Midtown Neighborhoods Plan is a blueprint for action. By setting goals, objectives and action steps, the neighborhoods create a vision and identify the steps needed to reach their goals. This plan organizes many of the neighborhoods' ideas into a single document that can be shared with residents, potential community partners and investors.



**Planning Area Basics**

The Midtown Neighborhoods are home to about 11,900 residents (also see Appendix A). The 1999 population reflects a ten percent increase in total population since 1990. This growth returns the neighborhoods to their 1980 population levels. The residents of the planning area are about 85 percent Hispanic, 13 percent Anglo, one percent African American and an additional one percent is composed of other races and ethnicities. Since the 1980 census, the number of Hispanics, African Americans and other races has increased. In the same time period, the number of Anglos has decreased. The median household income is \$19,917 compared with a citywide median income of \$32,238.

The development of the planning area's neighborhoods began in the 1890s as part of the northward expansion of the City of San Antonio (also see Appendix B). This development continued through the 1930s.

The most common architectural form in the neighborhoods is a one-story, wood frame bungalow. In the southern end of the planning area, the houses are larger, two-story homes, often with large porches. Small (two-to-four unit) apartment buildings are scattered throughout the neighborhood planning area.

The expansion of the neighborhoods was fueled, in part, by a street railway that traveled from downtown to San Pedro Springs Park. This park, the second oldest municipal park in the United States, serves the entire planning area and currently provides a place for both active and passive recreation, including a tennis center, a swimming pool, a library, a playhouse and historic springs.

In the 1920s, following the residential development of the area, service business owners constructed new structures or adapted existing buildings primarily in the commercial corridors located along Blanco, Fredericksburg, Flores, Hildebrand and San Pedro.

Beginning in the 1950s through the 1970s, property owners converted many residences into rental units and businesses began to leave the area's commercial centers.

In the 1990s through today, new families and businesses are

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attracted to the plan area. Residents are fixing up their homes and looking forward to additional neighborhood improvements. MidTown on Blanco, a Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (NCR) Project and a participant in the Texas Main Street Program, is organized to revitalize the Blanco business corridor between Hildebrand and Summit. Neighbors are interested in similar efforts beginning in the area's other commercial corridors.

### Getting Started

The neighborhoods successfully submitted a 1998-99 application to request the Planning Department's assistance in developing a neighborhood plan. In August 1999, the Planning Department began meeting with the Planning Team to develop a Memorandum of Understanding. The Planning Team (see Appendix C) is composed of representatives of the neighborhoods, businesses and schools. An initial team was proposed in the application and expanded after selection. The Memorandum of Understanding spelled out both the Planning Team's and the Planning Department's responsibilities towards the completion of the plan.

### Community-Based Process

The Midtown Neighborhoods Plan was developed following the guidelines set out in the *Community Building and Neighborhood Planning Program* (approved by City Council in October 1998).

A Kickoff Celebration was held September 1999 to introduce community members to the proposed timeline and tasks for plan completion (see Appendix D). Community stakeholders, including neighbors, business owners, neighborhood association representatives, church members, school officials and other interested groups, were invited to attend and give suggestions.

Between September and November 1999, fourteen Kitchen Table Conversations were organized by neighborhood volunteers. These volunteers handed out flyers to people living or working on nearby blocks. At the meetings, people gathered around the kitchen table, in small groups of five to ten folks, to talk about what was good and bad about the neighborhood. An

### ***What's in a Name?***

*In order to select a name for the planning area, the Planning Team decided to hold a contest with the winner receiving a gift certificate for dinner generously donated by Casbeers, a local restaurant. While the winner (Midtown Neighborhoods Plan) is obvious, some of the great suggestions are listed below.*

- Uptown Revival
- Vista Del Norte
- Roll Up Your Sleeves
- North Central Conservation
- Neighborhood – 2000
- We've Only Just Begun
- The Good Hood Group

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additional Kitchen Table Conversation was scheduled for the benefit of the business community in January.

Public meetings were held in January and May. At the January 2000 meeting, community members signed up to work in three work groups: Heart of the Neighborhood; Getting Around Town and Rebuilding Our Infrastructure; and Community Places Where We Play, Gather and Learn. These work groups met in February through April to develop the goals, objectives and action steps found in the plan chapters. The groups worked closely with "experts" to develop achievable and implementable plans for community improvement (see Appendix C). The results of these efforts were presented to the community at the May public meeting. An additional May meeting was scheduled for the business community to review the ideas presented at the May public meeting.

During July 2000, relevant city departments had an opportunity to review the plan for consistency with city policies. The lead partners and proposed partnerships, as well as other relevant agencies, also were asked to review and support the goals found in the plan.

A final draft of the plan was presented at an August community meeting. After the August meeting changes were added, the plan was presented to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration.

**Community Outreach**

The Planning Department, together with the Alta Vista Neighborhood, the Beacon Hill Neighborhood, St. Ann's Neighborhood, MidTown on Blanco and other community partners, worked to encourage participation in the neighborhood planning process. In addition to the mailing list of neighborhood stakeholders and meeting attendees, both Alta Vista and Beacon Hill residents walked every block in their neighborhoods delivering newsletters containing information on each community meeting. MidTown on Blanco also hand-delivered information on the meetings to businesses within their project area as well as included many meeting notices in their newsletter. Meeting dates and times were posted on the Alta Vista NA, Beacon Hill NA, and MidTown on Blanco websites.

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Area churches, including St. Ann's Catholic Church, Greater Lincoln Park Temple, and Beacon Hill Presbyterian Church, were encouraged to announce the meetings at their religious services and/or include meeting information in church bulletins.

In partnership with the San Antonio Independent School District, the Planning Department distributed flyers to the students and teachers at Beacon Hill ES, Cotton ES, and Twain MS. Press releases were sent to the *San Antonio Express News* and the San Antonio College newsletter, *Update*.

The Planning Department also worked to publicize the plan at community events including the Classic Days held Saturday, October 24, 1999 and the San Pedro Springs Park Opening held Saturday, May 20, 2000.

## Recognition by the City of San Antonio

After a review by city departments and a final community meeting, the Midtowns Neighborhood Plan was forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration. The Planning Commission reviewed the document to ensure the Midtown Neighborhoods Plan is inclusive, consistent with city policies and an accurate reflection of the community's values.

After the Planning Commission recommendation, the plan was forwarded to the City Council for adoption as a component of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan. An approved plan is used by city departments, boards and commissions as a guide for decision-making. Key projects may be selected from the plan to be included in the Annual Improvement Project Report. This report is recommended to City Council as a part of the budget process.

## Consistency with Other Plans

The Midtown Neighborhoods Plan is consistent with the ideas found in the *Five Points Neighborhood Plan*, the *1997 Master Plan*, the *1978 Major Thoroughfare Plan*, the *1999 Parks System Plan*, the *1998 CRAG Final Report* and the *2000 CRAG Report*. The planning area for the *Five Points Neighborhood Plan* is adjacent to the southern boundary of the Midtown Neighborhoods Plan.

The plan also is supported by the following Master Plan Goal:

*Neighborhoods, Goal 2: Strengthen the use of the Neighborhood Planning Process and*

*neighborhood plans.*

### **Plan Contents**

The Plan Summary Chapter reviews the neighborhoods' goals and objectives for community improvement. The SWOTs Map, included in the Plan Summary Chapter, reviews the major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats located in the planning area identified by community members.

Each of the following four chapters of the plan: Heart of the Neighborhood, Getting Around Town, Rebuilding Our Infrastructure, and Community Places Where We Play, Gather and Learn, include the goals, objectives, action steps, lead partners, proposed partnerships and proposed funding sources to achieve the neighborhoods' desired vision.

The Taking Action Chapter describes the group that will be charged with overseeing the work of implementation. The Measuring Our Success Chapter describes the indicators the neighborhoods will use to judge progress toward the community's goals.